

Briefing

Briefing for: Southwark Healthy Communities Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Date November 2016
Subject Maternal deaths at King's College Hospital

Background

King's College Hospital is a referral unit for women with complex medical problems that either develop during pregnancy or are pre-existing and deteriorate during pregnancy or during/after giving birth.

Of the four women who died in 2015, two gave birth at King's.

Women who gave birth at King's

One death has been reviewed at a Coroner's inquest earlier this year. This woman was not originally booked to deliver at King's, but was transferred for care due to deterioration in a pre-existing medical problem.

The other death was a woman with complex medical problems who delivered her baby at King's. Her death occurred outside the maternity unit in the postnatal period.

Women who did not give birth at King's

The other two women who died did not receive care in the maternity unit at King's. They gave birth at other hospitals and were transferred to King's for specialist (non-obstetric) medical care because of complications that had developed after the birth of their babies.

Reviews

All the deaths were reviewed according to the Trust's risk management protocol, and were reported as serious unexpected outcomes to our commissioners, which is required for all maternal deaths within 42 days of childbirth.

Internal review: Each maternal death was reviewed by a panel of clinicians, including specialists from external independent hospitals, who convened to review the cases and produced a report.

External review: In light of the Morecambe Bay Enquiry, King's felt that a review of the case notes and risk reports should be requested from another external specialist team, who would be able to make direct comparisons of the four cases. King's requested this to ensure there were no systemic failings that were being overlooked. The report from this review has been received and it concluded that there are no concerns about common themes or systemic failings.